

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515-0926

June 4, 2019

The Honorable Jonathan Hayes  
Office of Refugee Resettlement  
Administration of Children and Families  
**U.S. Department of Human & Health Services**  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Director Hayes:

I am writing to express concern about the welfare of the children detained at the Homestead Temporary Shelter for Unaccompanied Alien Children ("Homestead") in the event of a natural disaster. I am following up about the lack of evacuation and relocation procedures in place for the facility.

As you know, South Florida is a region at risk for extreme weather events such as hurricanes, tropical storms, tropical depressions, and flooding. In the last decade, Florida has seen multiple hurricanes and dozens of tropical storms with increasing intensity and frequency. Within this time period, the state experienced numerous deaths and disastrous physical damage. It is possible that another calamitous weather event will occur in the coming months, especially during hurricane season which is in effect until November 30.

During my last visit to the facility on Wednesday, May 29, I was explicitly told that there is no plan in place to evacuate or relocate the children prior to a natural disaster. Moreover, you informed me that a comprehensive plan is being developed and would be finalized within "seven to ten days." It is *extremely* alarming that an evacuation procedure for these children does not yet exist. The facility has been in operation for over seventeen months and it is incomprehensible that you, your team, or your Office has not developed such a strategy, especially in an area so vulnerable to hurricanes and natural disasters.

The absence of foresight or coordination to effectively prepare for a disaster is irresponsible and is needlessly endangering the lives of thousands of children. With hurricane season under way and pursuant to your representations during my visit to Homestead, please provide to my office a final version of the natural disaster evacuation and relocation plan for the Homestead Temporary Shelter by **June 12, 2019**.

I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Debbie Mucarsel-Powell  
Member of Congress